

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY ----- DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

Appln. No.: 09/399,753
Amendment dated October 31, 2003
Reply to Office Action of August 20, 2003

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-13 (Canceled).

14. (Presently Amended) A method of creating a user-defined networked environment across a plurality of computers without requiring system administrator-level privileges, comprising the steps of:

(1) creating a group by providing a group identifier, a group description, and by specifying a plurality of group members entitled to use the user-defined networked environment;

(2) selecting a plurality of web-accessible tools from a list of available web-accessible tools to be made available over an IP network from a tool provider node to the plurality of group members specified in step (1), wherein the selected web-accessible tools are provided at least through a web-based interface are to be made available over an IP network to the plurality of group members specified in step (1); and

(3) through the use of computer software, automatically creating the user-defined networked environment by creating a web page accessible to the plurality of group members selected specified in step (1), and providing access via the web page to the plurality of web-accessible tools selected in step (2).

15. (Presently Amended) The method of claim 14, wherein step (1) further comprises the step of inviting a plurality of individuals to join the group by transmitting an invitation to prospective group members.

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16. (Presently Amended) The method of claim 14, wherein step (1) further comprises the step of advertising an invitation to join the group by posting an advertisement for prospective group members, wherein at least some of the prospective group members are unknown to the user creating the networked environment.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of screening prospective members that respond to an advertisement in order to determine whether they should be added to the group.

18. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising the steps of electronically collaborating among group members using the user-defined networked environment.

19. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of destroying the user-defined networked environment when it is no longer needed.

20. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of selecting a transaction engine that implements an auction to members of the group.

21. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of selecting a transaction engine that implements an on-line electronic survey comprising survey questions that are to be answered electronically by survey participants.

22. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of selecting a transaction engine that implements a bid-and-proposal tool that permits group members to electronically submit bids on one or more proposals.

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23. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of selecting an online ordering engine that permits group members to electronically order goods or services in the user-defined networked environment.

24. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of selecting an Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) compatible interface that executes electronic commercial transactions between two or more group members.

25. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of selecting an electronic brain-writing tool that permits participants to brainstorm using electronic idea cards.

26. (Presently Amended) A system for implementing a user-defined networked environment that can be created without the need for system administrator-level privileges, comprising:

a plurality of networked computers that communicate using Internet Protocol;

a plurality of web browsers executing on the plurality of networked computers;

a database that stores information concerning the group members in the user-defined networked environment; and

a computer program executing on one or more of the plurality of networked computers, wherein the computer program performs the steps of:

(1) permitting a user to create a group comprising a plurality of group members;

(2) permitting the user to select a plurality of web-accessible communication,

collaboration, and transaction tools from a list of available tools, wherein the selected tools are

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| provided at least through a web-based interface and are to be made available to the plurality of group members over an IP network; and

(3) automatically generating a web page accessible to the plurality of group members, and providing access via the web page to the plurality of web-accessible tools selected in step (2).

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the plurality of web-accessible tools provide for negotiating a deal over the plurality of computers, and the method further comprises:

(4) posting on the web page an electronic list of information regarding one or more offers to form a contract;

(5) posting on the electronic list one or more responses to the one or more offers; (6) researching the one or more responses to determine whether they satisfy one or more contract criteria;

(7) negotiating over the network between at least two parties to accept or modify one or more of the responses; and

(8) electronically signing a document to consummate the contract.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of sorting the one or more offers and one or more responses according to a user-selected sort order.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, wherein steps (4) and (5) are done anonymously, such that each party to the contract cannot determine the identity of the other party to the contract.

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30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, further comprising the step of simultaneously revealing the identity of each party prior to step (8).

31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30, wherein steps (4) and (7) comprise the step of sharing a single anonymous e-mail alias among a plurality of users.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, further comprising the steps of:

(9) registering keywords with an electronic agent that monitors the one or more offers and providing an e-mail address to be notified upon a keyword match; and

(10) in response to the electronic agent detecting the keyword match, transmitting a message to the e-mail address provided in step (9).

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, wherein step (5) comprises the step of clicking on a hyperlink linking the information posted in step (4) to a reply card.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 33, wherein step (5) comprises the step of requiring the submission of certain information before the reply card will be accepted.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, wherein steps (6) and (7) are performed a plurality of times for a single contract, such that modifications are made to the one or more responses.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of electronically registering a plurality of entities that have signatory authority and correlating the registered entities with one or more documents to which signatures can be affixed.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the networked computers comprise at least one or more computers connected to the Internet.

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38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein in steps (2) and (3) the plurality of web-accessible tools comprise communication, collaboration, and transaction tools.

39. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the user-defined networked environment is created and accessed via a single network.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 39, wherein the single network comprises the Internet.

41. (Presently Amended) A method of creating a user-defined network environment comprising specifying a plurality of group members entitled to use the created user-defined network environment by accessing the network environment through a web-based interface over an IP network, creating a web page, selecting a plurality of web-accessible tools that are provided through the web-based interface, and providing access to the selected web-accessible tools via the created web page to the plurality of group members entitled to use the created user-defined network environment.

42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 41, wherein the single network comprises the Internet.